

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C

(Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23; Col 3:1-5, 9-11; Luke 12:13-21)

Excerpts of Pope Francis – Angelus - 31 July 2022

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Brothers and sisters, is today's Gospel story still a very common situation? Yes, similar problems are still commonplace. How many brothers and sisters, how many members of the same family, unfortunately fight over their inheritance, perhaps no longer speaking to each other!

Responding to the man, Jesus does not get into the details, but goes to the root of the divisions caused by the possession of things. He says clearly: "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed".

What is greed? It is the uncontrolled or unrestrained hunger, appetite, or craving for possessions, always desiring to be rich. This is an illness that destroys people, because the hunger for possessions creates an addiction. Above all, those who have a lot are never content, they always want more, and only for themselves. But this way, the person is no longer free: he or she is attached to, a slave of, what in actual fact was meant to serve them so as to live freely and peacefully. Rather than *being served* by money, the person becomes a *servant* or slave of money.

But greed is a dangerous illness for society as well — due to greed, we have today reached other paradoxes: an injustice never before seen in history, where few have so much and so many have little or nothing. Let's consider wars and conflicts as well. The lust for resources and wealth is almost always involved. How many interests are behind a war! Certainly, one of these is the arms trade. This trade is a scandal to which we must never resign ourselves.

Today, Jesus teaches us that at the heart of all this are not only some who are powerful, or certain economic systems. The greed that is *in everyone's heart* is at the centre. And so, let us try to ask ourselves: How is my detachment from possessions, from wealth going? Do I complain about what I lack, or do I know how to be content with what I have? In the name of money or opportunity, am I tempted to sacrifice relationships and sacrifice time with others? And yet again, does it happen that I sacrifice legality and honesty on the altar of greed? I said "altar", the altar of greed, but why did I say altar? Because material goods, money, riches, can become a cult, a true and proper idolatry.

This is why Jesus warns us with strong words. He says, *you cannot serve two masters*, and — let's be careful — he does not say God and the devil, no, or even the good and the bad, but, *God and wealth* (cf. *Lk 16:13*). One would expect that he would have said that you cannot serve two masters, God and the devil. Instead he says *God and wealth*. That wealth be at our service, yes; to serve wealth, no — that is idolatry, that is an offence to God.

And so, we might think, should no one desire to get rich? Certainly, you can; rather, it is right to want it. It is beautiful to become rich, but *rich according to God!* God is the richest of all. He is rich in compassion, in mercy. His wealth does not impoverish anyone, does not create fights and divisions. It is a richness that loves to give, to distribute, to share.

Brothers and sisters, accumulating material goods is not enough to live well, for Jesus says also that life does not consist in one's possessions. It depends, instead, on good relationships — with God, with others, and even with those who have less. So, let us ask ourselves: How do I want to get rich? Do I want to get rich according to God or according to my greed?

And, returning to the topic of inheritance, what legacy do I want to leave? Money in the bank, material things, or happy people around me, good works that are not forgotten, people that I have helped to grow and mature?

May this Eucharist help us understand what the true goods of life are, the ones that last forever.